

Aves, Charadriiformes, Scolopacidae, *Limosa haemastica* (Linnaeus, 1758): First record from South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula, Antarctica

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ABSTRACT: We report herein the southernmost record of the Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*), at two localities in the Antarctic: Esperanza/Hope Bay (January 2005) and 25 de Mayo/King George Island (October 2008). On both occasions a pair of specimens with winter plumage was observed.

The Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* (Linnaeus 1758) is a nearctic migratory species that breeds in Alaska and Canada during summer and spends its non-breeding period in the southernmost regions of South America during the boreal winter. They forage by thrusting their bill rapidly into the mud to locate insects, molluscs, crustaceans and other aquatic animals (Rylander and Rylander 2002). It is a bird species of high conservation concern in Canada and the United States (Johnson *et al.* 2007) due to its small population size, population decline, restricted breeding and non-breeding distributions, and the significant threats to which it is exposed in the non-breeding season.

During the non-breeding season the *Limosa haemastica* population is confined to a few sites where it is found in great concentrations (Johnson *et al.* 2007; Senner 2010), especially at Bahía Lomas (Chile), Bahía San Sebastián (Argentina), both on Tierra del Fuego Island, and Chiloé Island and the adjacent mainland coast in central Chile (Morrison and Ross 1989; Harrington *et al.* 1993; Del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). It has occurred, as well, at Malvinas Islands (Gould and Darwin 1841; Clark 1986; Woods 1988).

In this note we report the first record of *Limosa haemastica* at two localities in the Antarctic Peninsula region during different years (Figure 1). On 5 January 2005, two individuals were recorded near the Argentinean Esperanza Base at Esperanza/Hope Bay (63°23'52" S, 56°59'45" W). They were observed together 150 m from the beach in the intersection of two streams where green algae develops (Chlorophyta, Prasiolaceae, *Prasiola* sp.). They were sighted only once and were not photographed. More recently, 21-27 October 2008, two individuals were seen in the vicinity of Jubany Base (62°14'15" S, 58°39'57" W), Potter Cove, 25 de Mayo/King George Island, South Shetland Islands. They were observed on four occasions three different days and only once they were together (Figure 2). All of these observations coincided with low

tide and each time birds were feeding in the intertidal zone. These individuals showed the winter plumage pattern: dark reddish chest and white ventral region, black primaries and tail feathers, a long upturned bill pink at base and dark at tip (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). When in flight, the white wing stripe and rump were evident (Figure 3).

Several other bird species that are prevalent in the southern region of South America have been recorded as vagrants in the Antarctic Peninsula region. These include White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* in the South Shetland Islands (Gajardo and Yañez 1982; Trivelpiece *et al.* 1987; Silva *et al.* 1995); Black-necked Swans *Cygnus melancorhyphus* at South Shetland Islands and other Antarctic localities (Bennett 1922; Lazo and Yañez 1989;

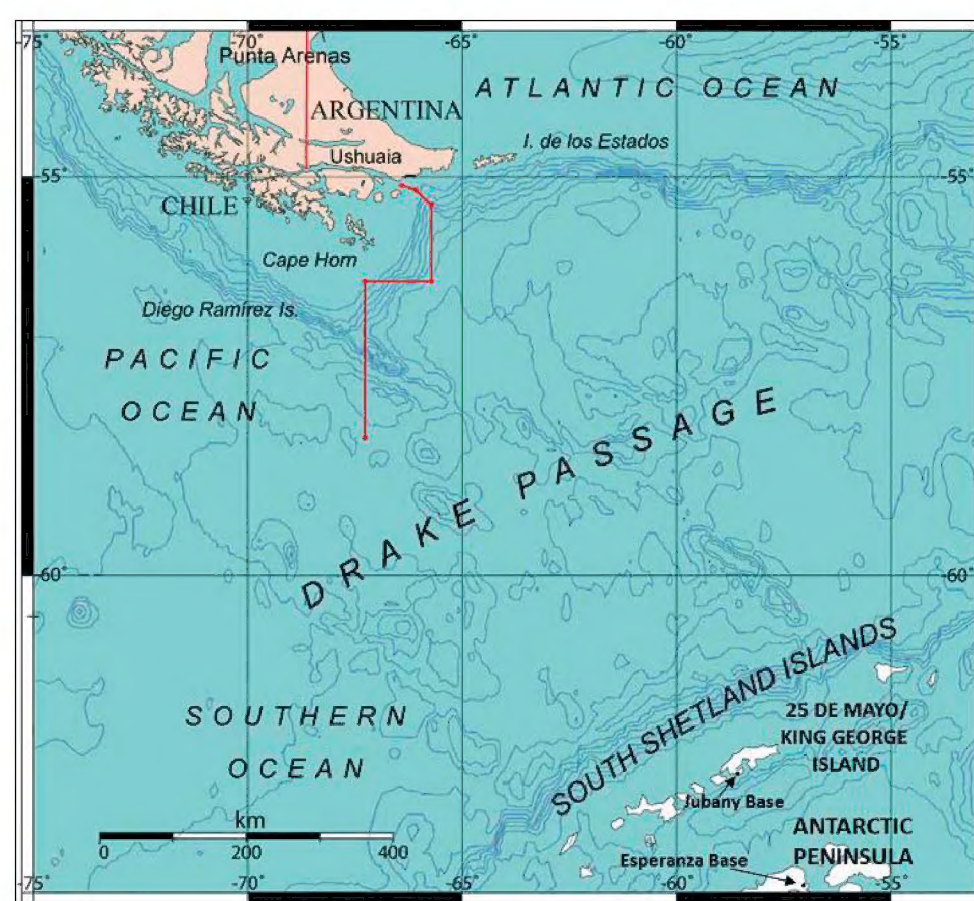


FIGURE 1. Distribution of Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* during its non-breeding visit to South America (pink), as well as occasional, more southerly records (Antarctic). Red line shows national boundary between Chile and Argentina.

Parmelee and Fraser 1989; Favero *et al.* 1991; Silva *et al.* 1995); Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* in South Orkney Islands, South Shetland Islands (Schlatter and Duarte 1979; Torres *et al.* 1986; Trivelpiece *et al.* 1987; Rootes 1988; Favero *et al.* 1991; Silva *et al.* 1995) and Argentine Islands (Prince and Croxall 1983); Least Seedsnipe *Thinocorus rumicivorus* at South Shetland Islands (Favero and Silva 1998); and Austral Thrush (*Turdus falcklandii*) in South Shetland Islands (Santos *et al.* 2007).

The most common factor offered to explain vagrancy according to these authors are unusual weather conditions, such as storms or droughts, which drive birds away from their normal distribution and migration routes (Orgeira and Fogliatto 1991). Strong winds were registered in both years just before the dates when the *Limosa haemastica* reported herein were observed. From the end of December 2004 to the beginning of January 2005 winds over 40 knots, especially from the north, prevailed in the Esperanza Base area. Similar conditions were registered in October 2008 at Jubany Base, where the strong northerly winds reached 22 - 46 knots, exceeding 50 knots in September. It could well be that the presence of these birds in our study areas is associated with these weather conditions, such as the wind speed and direction, thus facilitating their movement south from southern South America.



FIGURE 2. Two individuals of Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* at Potter Peninsula, 25 de Mayo/King George Island, South Shetland Islands, 21 October 2008. Photograph by Javier Negrete.

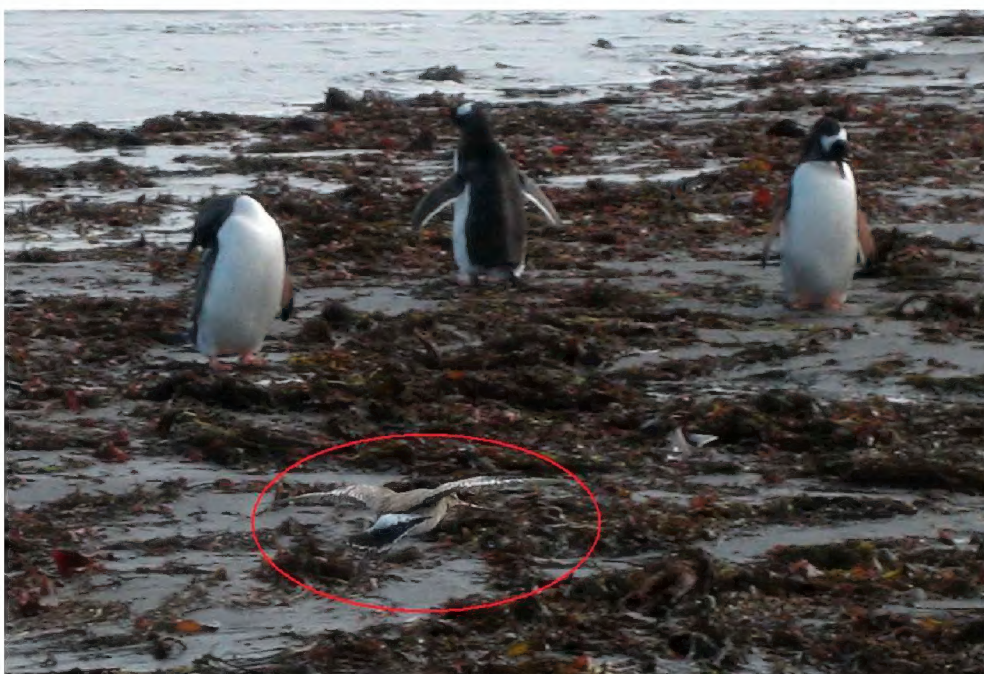


FIGURE 3. Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* flying at Potter Peninsula, 25 de Mayo/King George Island, South Shetland Islands, 24 October 2008. Photograph by Martín Gray.

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